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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 004930

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR (MCISAAC)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2013

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM SMIG DR

SUBJECT: STORY OF HAITIAN CADAVERS ALONG BORDER STILL

UNCLEAR

Classified By: ECOPOL COUNSELOR MICHAEL MEIGS FOR REASONS 1.5 (B/D)

¶11. (C) The Dominican Committee on Human Rights announced on September 3 that approximately 14 Haitian bodies had been discovered in Pedernales, a province along the Dominican-Haitian border. Virgilio Almanzar, chairperson of the committee, told Poloffs that he personally saw only 7 skeletons during a recent trip to the site, but expected to find more on a follow-up visit next week. Almanzar confirmed that the Attorney General's office in cooperation with Armed Forces officials would send a team to the border to investigate the murder allegations. The details of what happened remain sketchy. During a September 10 meeting with Poloffs, Almanzar claimed that one of the female victims had been sexually assaulted before being killed. However, Almanzar also admitted that two of the victims had died of hunger or dehydration, and wild dogs had eaten some of the bodies.

¶12. (C) Almanzar said Army officers along the border frequently accept bribes in determining which Haitians should or should not be allowed entry into the Dominican Republic, an issue that has been covered in Human Rights Reports. According to Almanzar, some Army officers known to assassinate Haitians are also drug traffickers and pay off Dominican military intelligence officials to keep their jobs.

¶13. (C) Comment: Even though he is a respected human rights consultant in civil society, Almanzar rarely produces hard evidence to support his allegations. That said, it is difficult to gather solid information from any source on Haitian migrants given the porous border situation and a culture permeated by corruption.

HERTELL